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ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit, incorporating an art specialist's experience and knowledge gained in Mexico as a participant in the Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminars Abroad Program, focuses on the creation of a ceramic shrine by 75 fifth graders. The ceramic shrine described in the unit uses clay, paint, varnish, collage materials, and tin for "milagros" (representing the students' hopes, wishes, and dreams). The unit outlines the key concepts and the arts essential learning focus; provides teaching strategies; describes the project; and explains procedures and teaching techniques for building a slab container, creating the clay figure, and creating clay decorations. It lists resources and materials needed for the project and provides assessment criteria, as well as extensions to Washington State learning goals. The unit also describes "What the Instructor Does," "What the Student Does," and it provides a "key vocabulary", It also contains photographs of the class projects. (Contains 12 references.) (BT)

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Clay Shrines by 75 Fifth Graders

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Objectives

To develop a curriculum unit that is incorporated into my teaching curriculum based on my experience and knowledge gained as a participant in the Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad Program.

Key Concepts

- Artists may draw upon the ethnic, popular, and folk symbols and myths of their cultural heritage for their work.
- Artists may develop a vocabulary of forms which combines universal symbols with symbols that have particularly personal meanings.
- A visual symbol can function like a signature, identifying the artist.

Arts Essential Learning Focus

1. Acquires knowledge and skills
   - 1.1 Learns concepts and vocabulary
   - 1.2 Uses art techniques
   - 1.3 Exhibits craftsmanship
   - 1.4 Creates, presents, and evaluates
2. Solves problems
   - 2.1 Uses the senses to gather information
   - 2.2 Solves problems
   - 2.3 Critiques artwork
3. Communicates
   - 3.1 Expresses individual ideas
4. Makes connections
   - 4.1 Integrates art in other subjects
   - 4.2 Uses artistic knowledge
   - 4.3 Recognizes historical and cultural significance in art

Strategies

Brief Description of Task/Project

Students, 75 fifth graders, will create a ceramic shrine using clay, paint, varnish, tin milagros (representing their hopes, wishes, and dreams), and collage materials.

A clay figure representing the student will be placed either inside or on the shrine with a wire inserted in a hole. Clay decorative objects such as stars, moons, and suns will also be sticking out on top of the shrine using the same method.

Explicit Target Learning Outcomes

The student will:

- Examine ways to use the shrine for storytelling, drama, music, and dance that expresses the student's hopes, wishes, and dreams for the future.
- Select artistic tools and materials to create a 3-D shrine.
- Develop clay, painting, and collage techniques to create a shrine in honor of oneself.

Procedures and Teaching Techniques

A slab container is built with flat pieces of clay which are joined together to form a container.

Building a Slab Container

1. Knead (wedge) the clay to a workable consistency.
2. Spread the damp cloth on a smooth table top.
3. Place two sticks parallel to each other on the damp cloth. The space between the sticks will be the width of the finished tile.
4. Roll a ball of clay and place it between the sticks.
5. Flatten the clay by running a rolling pin along the parallel sticks. The clay will be flattened to the thickness of the sticks.
6. Place a cardboard pattern over the flattened clay. Using it as a guide, cut around the pattern with a knife.
7. Using the same cardboard pattern, cut three more slabs and allow them to stiffen to a leather-hard condition.
8. To assemble a container, score the edge of each slab with a knife.
9. Put slip on the scored edge and place two pieces together.

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10. Prepare a small roll of clay and press into the joint of each corner.

    Continue this procedure until all four sides are together and smoothed inside and out.

11. Score the edges of a fifth piece, which will be the bottom.

12. Press the four sides on the bottom and complete.

13. Let dry and fire greenware in the kiln.

Creating the Clay Figure

1. Knead (wedge) the clay to a workable consistency.
2. Spread a damp cloth on a smooth table top. Place two sticks (1/2 inch thick) parallel to each other on the damp cloth. The distance between the sticks will determine the size of the finished figure.
3. Roll a ball of clay between the palms of the hands to form a sphere and place it between the sticks.
4. Flatten the ball of clay by running a rolling pin along the parallel sticks.
5. Draw a figure on a piece of paper that is the size of the clay slab.
6. Cut the figure pattern out of the paper and place it on the slab of clay.
7. Hold the paper in place and following the outline of the pattern, cut the clay with a knife.
8. Gently remove the clay figure from the slab and curve it into the desired position.
9. Smooth out any rough edges and add textures or features with any modeling tool.
10. Make a hole in the figure with a toothpick. A wire will be inserted into this hole to attach the figure to the shrine.
11. Allow the figure to dry.
12. Fire in kiln.

Clay Decorations

Same method as above.

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Resources and Materials

- ❑ Local or commercial water-base clay
- ❑ Rolling pin
- ❑ Two sticks approximately 1/2 inch thick and 12-20 inches long
- ❑ Damp cloth
- ❑ Knife or scissors
- ❑ Water container for mixing slip
- ❑ Cardboard pattern
- ❑ Collage materials (feathers, glitter, colored glass, beads, trinkets, ribbon)
- ❑ Tin for milagros
- ❑ Tempera paint
- ❑ Varnish
- ❑ Wire
- ❑ Toothpicks
- ❑ Brushes, assorted sizes

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Assessment Criteria

The student will:

- ❑ Demonstrate the message of the container/shrine through storytelling, poetry, prose, drama, music, or dance.
- ❑ Transform basic containers into a 3-D form.
- ❑ Demonstrate craftsmanship using clay and painting techniques.
- ❑ Define the individuality of the shrine through the choice of expressive color and design using paint and collage techniques.

Extensions to State Learning Goals

Goal 1: Students will read, write, and communicate in the course of this project.

Goal 2: Students will focus on the historical and cultural context of the shrine.

Goal 3: Students will think creatively and solve problems.

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What the Instructor Does

1. Teacher provides students with an overview of shrines from a cultural and historical context.
2. Teacher facilitates students in a discussion of students' hopes, wishes, and dreams as fifth graders will graduate in June and go on to middle school.
3. Teacher demonstrates and assists students in the assemblage of forms and the slab/clay technique.
4. Teacher demonstrates and assists students in the painting and collage techniques.

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What the Student Does

1. Student makes a clay container and figure.
2. Student assembles the form.
3. Student observes demonstration by teacher of painting and collage techniques.
4. Student completes a personal shrine, figure, and decorative object.

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Assessment Strategies

1. Teacher reviews the choices the students make for their shrines.
2. Performance-based art production.
3. A student reflection question allows students to write about the process of creating their shrines, what they liked best, and what they would do differently the next time.

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Key Vocabulary

- 3-D
- shape/form
- assemblage
- collage
- cylindrical slab container
- slip
- score
- kiln
- transformation
- communication
- representational
- folk art
- milagros
- fiesta
- Day of the Dead
- Frida Kahlo

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Attachments and Background

Attachments:

- Bibliography
- Culmination of curriculum project

The curriculum project culminated in a school-wide fiesta. A mariachi band played at the students' lunchtime. The lunchroom was decorated with the art of Mexico.

Students displayed their shrines on risers on the school stage. Several shared their shrine and read aloud poetry or prose describing their feelings.

The choir sang "Las Mananitas" and the Hispanic students were introduced and made to feel proud and special.

The mothers of the students wore Mexican blouses and helped serve a Mexican lunch.

Projects:

Grade 5:

shrines, papier mache Day of the Dead rattles (performed to music); Veracruz masks; calaveras - mixed media; portraits in the style of Frida Kahlo; papel picado; clay suns

Grade 4:

masks, pinatas

Grade 3:

toys, dancing skeletons, Day of the Dead mural

Grade 2:

tissue paper flowers, kites based on illustrations of Rodolpho Morales in the book, Angel's Kite by Alberto Blanco

Grade 1:

skeleton paper bag puppets; tissue paper landscapes of Mexico; clay suns

Kindergarten:

clay suns

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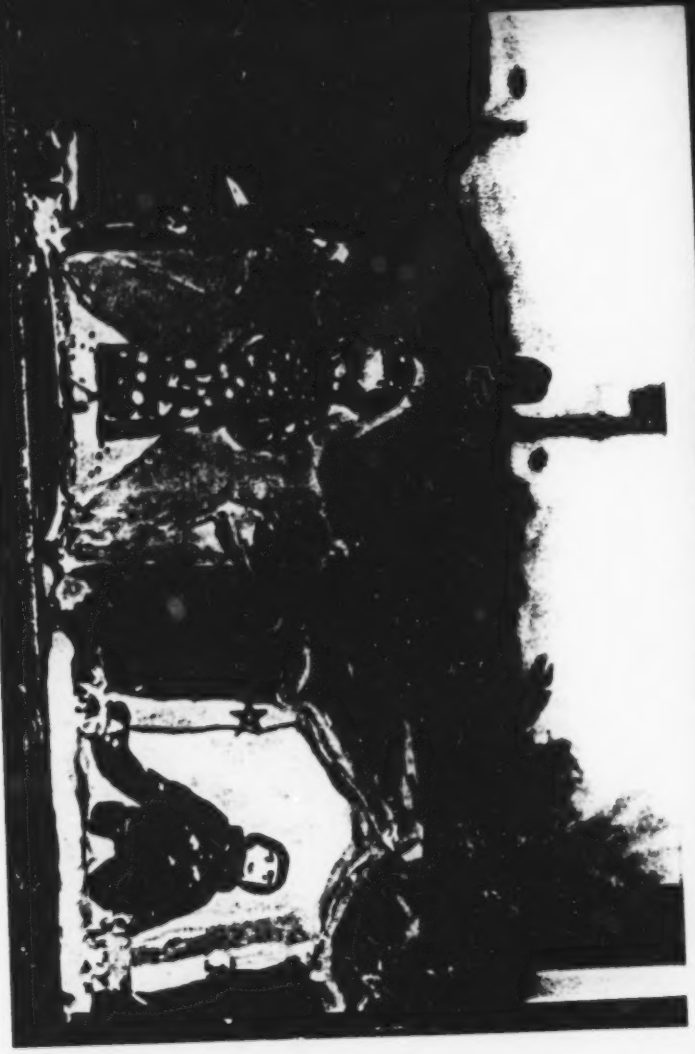

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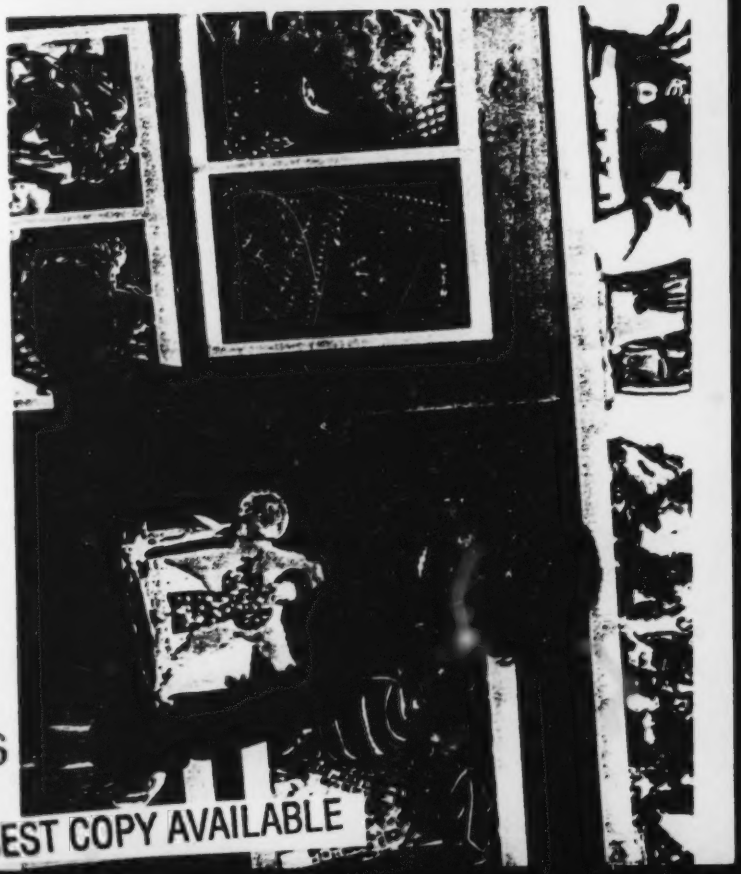

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